



COVID 19 And Newark's Children & Youth

Capturing Stories and
Artistic Expressions
of the PANDEMIC

On the Cover

ART PROJECT: A COVID FAMILY TRIBUTE STORY QUILT

After the events involving Covid 19 last year, we introduced the art works of American Artist Faith Ringgold and her style of creating story quilts as art.

Both the students and teachers had a discussion of the children's experiences and their feelings relating to Covid 19. During that discussion the overwhelming consensus was that the thing that made us feel hopeful was the support of our families, so as a result, we decided to do a tribute story quilt in the art genre of the "Story Quilt" like the famous African American female artist Faith Ringgold. The students created this tribute Story Quilt with the support of their parents in that tradition.

Students

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Jordan Espinoza, Grade 3
Anthony Martinez, Grade 3
Jamaal McCall, Grade 3
Aaziiyah McGuire, Grade 3
Mason Santiago, Grade 4
Tanazia Stokley, Grade 4

Teachers

Ms. Cassandra Carson, MDMI Teacher
Ms. Kashi, Teacher Assistant
Mr. Davis Hannah, Art Teacher

COVID 19 And Newark's Children & Youth Capturing Stories and Artistic Expressions of the PANDEMIC

Saturday, March 14, 2020, the day all of our lives were impacted and changed dramatically. The genesis of the Covid 19 virus hindered and disrupted our daily life functions in significant and profound ways. During this time of uncertainty, we all suffered greatly in ways we have yet to comprehend and understand.

Perhaps, one of the most impacted residents are our precious children and youth. They could not physically attend school, could not see family members, loved ones, friends and teachers in person. There was loneliness, isolation, sadness, frustration and fear. For a time, we could not leave our homes, had to wear masks when we did, and everything was closed or had very restricted hours. A scary time for all especially our children and youth.

Newark's children and youth were invited to share their experiences, stories and artistic expressions within the themes of love, loss, perseverance, social justice and community resilience. This project highlights their expressions which are thought provoking, moving and compelling.

**Love, defend, protect, teach our most precious gifts:
Our children, our future leaders.**

*This publication is generously supported by the New Jersey Council for the Humanities
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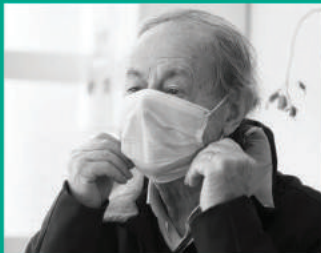
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WE NEED YOU TO

#MaskUpNewark

You have the power
to keep people safe.



Make sure you have a mask.

Make sure everyone you
know has a mask.

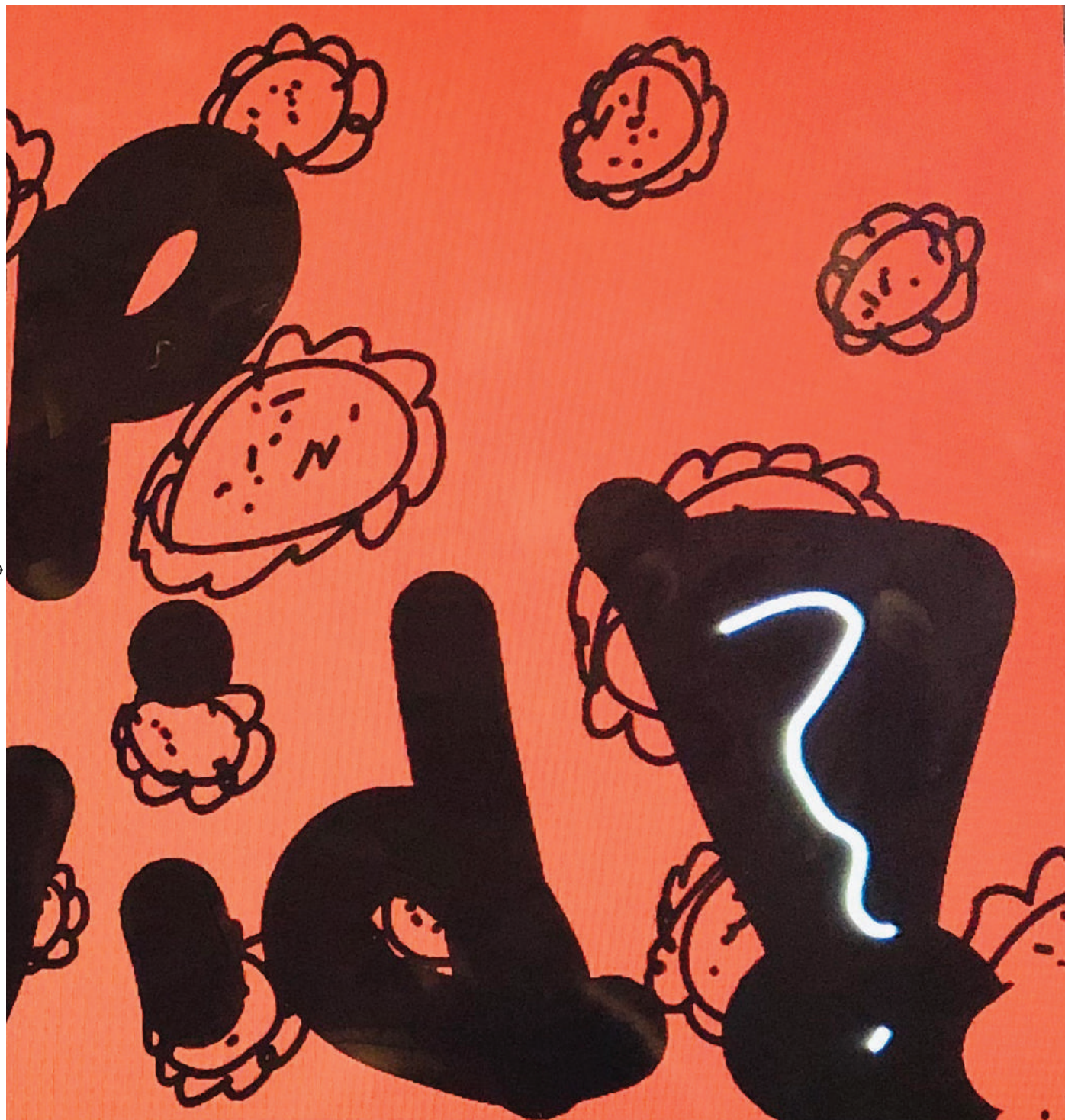
WEAR YOUR MASK.



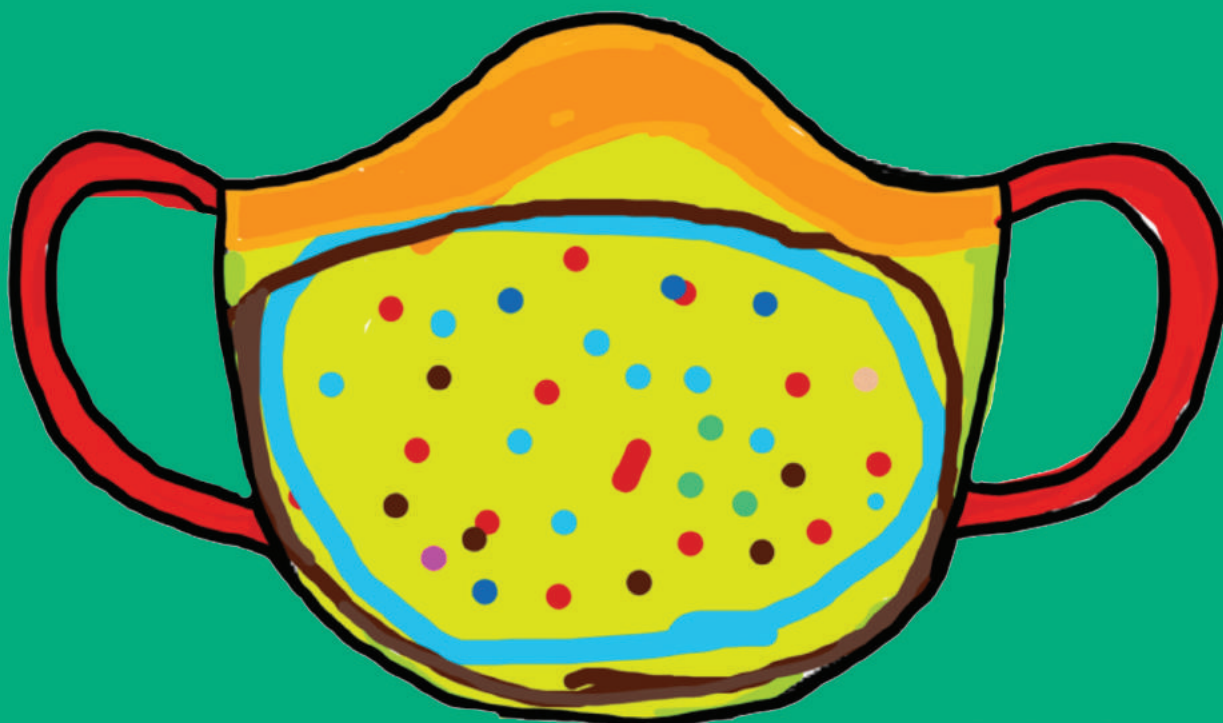
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CITY OF **NEWARK**
Mayor Ras J. Baraka





Imani A. Perez | *FOCUS Family Success Center*



MY HAPPY MASK

Ayvien Gonzalez | *Grade One* | *Celeste Verissimo, Instructor, Art*
Belmont Runyon Elementary School

Camden Street School

Victoria Akindeinde | *Grade Five | Mrs. Ashie, School Media Specialist*

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED ABOUT MYSELF DURING THE LOCKDOWN IS THAT I LIKE TO COOK. I learned how deadly a virus is too. I also learned that Covid-19 Virus spreads rapidly. Further, I learned how to have fun while eating food, drinks, and snacks.

However, I learned that a lockdown can be boring.

Yes, I have experienced Webex mishaps. I was singing badly on purpose and then I realized I was unmuted. Another time I had to unmute but it was not working and the teacher could not hear me. When I finally unmuted and gave the wrong answer. I was so busy with the audio that I forgot to pay attention.

My birthday with my family was joyful. I went to the buffet with my family. Then I continued the celebration at home and ate cake. I was excited. I got a nice birthday present. It was an amazing day. Things felt almost normal.

The acts of kindness that I witnessed is when people feed the homeless. It made me feel happy that there is kindness in the world. I also witnessed someone in my class help my ESL classmate. It made me feel great that people are getting help. In addition, I witnessed someone helping a man with his car. This gave me hope in humanity. ■

**“Protecting the people of Newark
against the spread of COVID-19 is our
primary goal...We have to continue
to work hard to save our community.”**
Mayor Ras J. Baraka

Kailah Porterfield | *Grade Five*

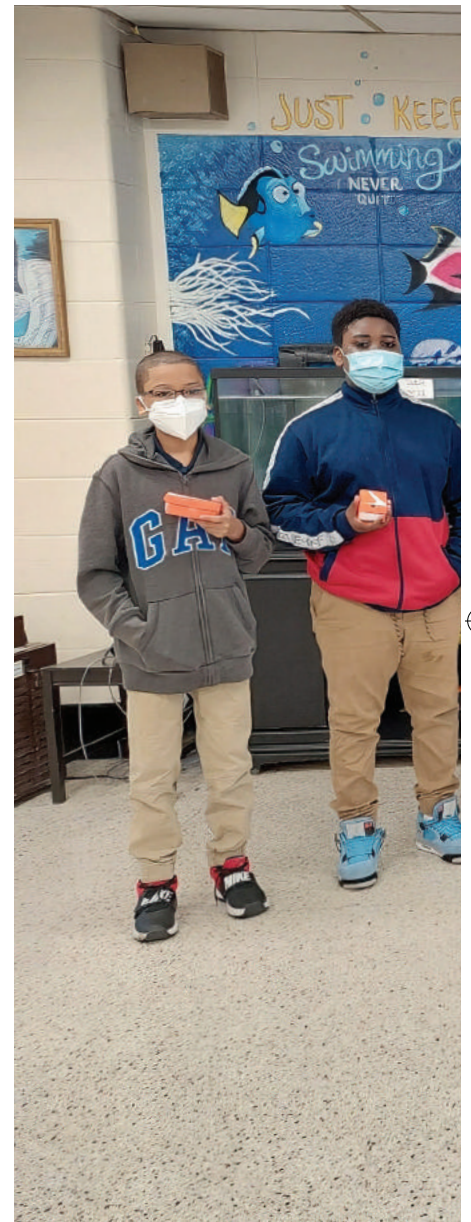
Mrs. Ashie, School Media Specialist

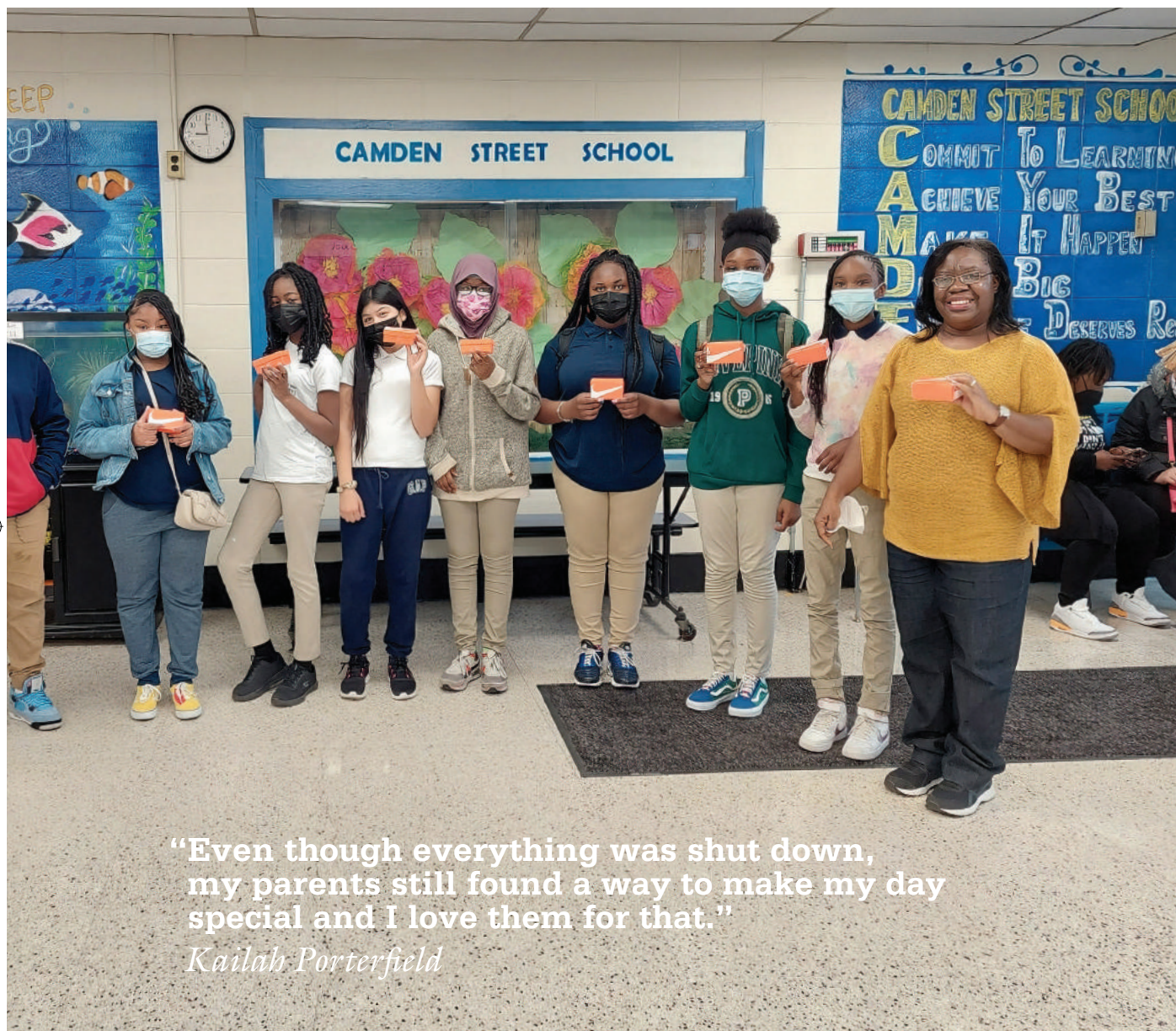
I CELEBRATED MY BIRTHDAY DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN. I went to the hotel and had 5 people at my party. I also Facetimed with my family. We had so much fun. Even though everything was shut down, my parents still found a way to make my day special and I love them for that.

One embarrassing thing that happened when I was on Webex was that I was unmuted and didn't know I was. The teacher had to tell me to mute myself because of the background noise. It was a good thing that nothing was really going on in my house at that time.

Something I learned about myself is that I know how to do my own nails. I also learned that I can dance. However, I did realize that I have to improve my handwriting. I must form my letters smaller so that I can write better. I did not know that this could change. But now I see that as I practice, my handwriting is getting better and better.

Also during the Covid-19 lockdown I celebrated Christmas by putting up my Christmas tree. I put candy canes on the tree. Then on Christmas day I opened my presents. This brought me joy because I got everything that I asked my parents for. An act of kindness is helping people. This is teamwork and it makes people feel good. If they were sad they might become happy that you helped them. ■





"Even though everything was shut down,
my parents still found a way to make my day
special and I love them for that."

Kailah Porterfield

Above: Camden Street scholars, our children, our future.

Jamilet Guadalupe | *Grade Five* | *Mrs. Ashie, School Media Specialist*

I HAVE NOTICED THE WORLD HAS CHANGED BECAUSE SCHOOLS WERE SHUT DOWN AND VIRTUAL SCHOOLS CAME ABOUT.

I was so stressed when virtual school came because I felt like I was not capable of learning from a computer. Covid-19 affected my family because we could not see each other. Also Covid-19 killed people. Covid-19 is not the best thing to experience.

Things that I have noticed about myself during the lockdown is that I was stuck inside the house so much that I felt like I was under a rock.

When I would get bored I would just eat food because I didn't know what else to do. Also I developed a bad sleeping schedule and would go to bed at about 12:00 to 1:00 in the morning. I would be so stressed when we were in lock down. I was so happy when I got to go outside after the pandemic calmed down.

In addition, the holidays were fun and I would spend time with my family members who lived with me. Thanksgiving is my all time favorite holiday. My family and I ate turkey, rice and mac'n cheese. Family time is something to appreciate. You can always have a fun time. One act of kindness I have seen and experienced giving money to a homeless person. It is always good to help out someone who has less than you. ■



**“The act of kindness I saw was
how people helped and were kind
to others by giving them food.
It made me feel happy. There is
kindness all around the world.”**
Fatoumata Diallo

Fatoumata Diallo | *Grade Five | Mrs. Ashie, School Media Specialist*

DURING THE PANDEMIC MY COUSIN HAD A BARBEQUE SO I WENT TO HER HOUSE. We did Tik Tok Videos together and I ate some chicken. After that, we got ice cream. I played some board games and went to the store where I bought doughnuts and sunflower seeds. We chilled and played with my niece. Then my cousin and I did our makeup. We also played Roblox and did our nails. I went home after that. These are the things that bring me joy.

In this world I am noticing people getting shot. Black people get targeted because of their skin color. During the pandemic I celebrated Eid. I also got to spend time with my niece and sister in law for the first time. I had fun. We ate and took some pictures. After that we went to a BBQ and I received money. The embarrassing thing that happened on Webex was that I didn't know that I was unmuted. I was talking about going to the bathroom and eating. Everyone heard me.

The act of kindness I saw was how people helped and were kind to others by giving them food. It made me feel happy. There is kindness all around the world. There were strangers helping people out if they needed help. We should be kind in this world because if you are not, you will make people feel like they are not welcomed in this world. This will make them insecure about themselves. As a result, this may cause them to do something bad to themselves. Never bully someone or cyber bullying them. ■

Allianna Gordon | *Grade Five* | *Mrs. Ashie, School Media Specialist*

WHEN I WAS ON WEBEX I WAS ON MY BED. My 10 month old sister randomly started climbing on me. Everyone could see her on my camera. They thought this was funny. Then she began chewing on the school computer's charger. I had to put her out of my room.

When I was on the lock down and it was my birthday and I was sad because it was raining. But then my family ordered food from

Apple-Bee's and a red velvet cake. I also went to the theater to watch a movie called "Free Guy". You should watch it too. It was a very good movie.

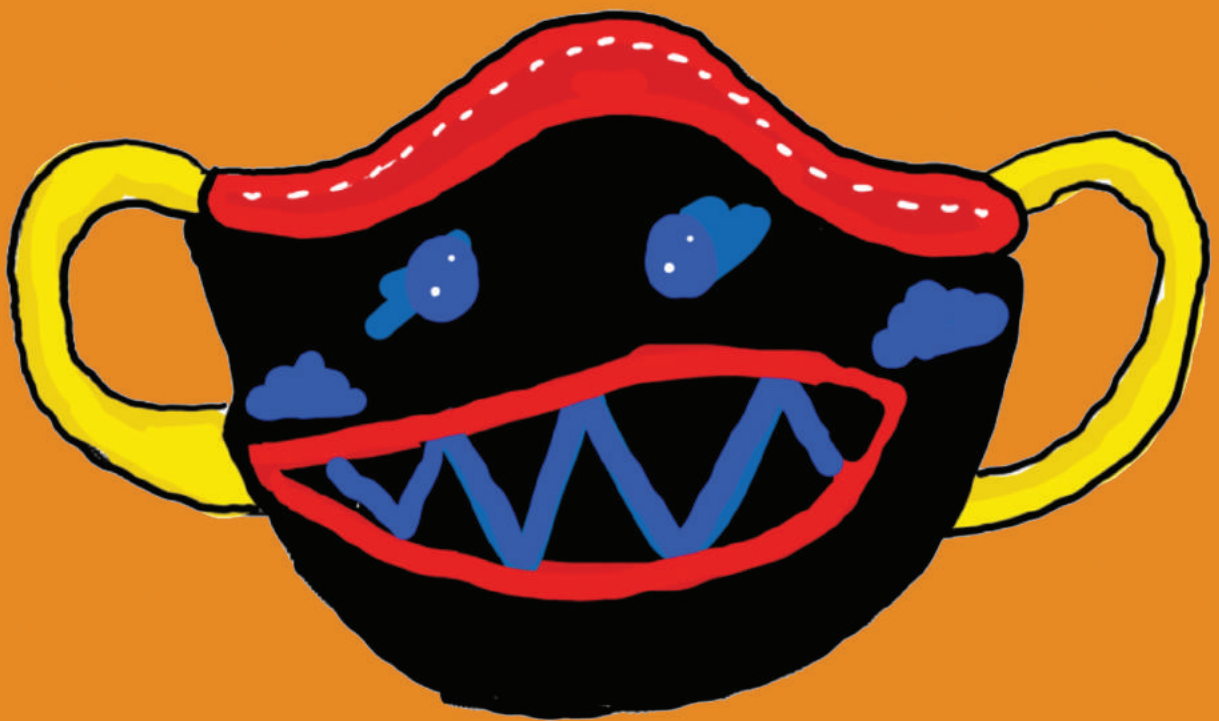
I noticed small changes around the world. More than thousands of people are getting Covid-19. But I bounced back from its negative effects. I am wearing a mask and making sure I sanitize. I wear gloves to protect myself and other people. One thing I learned about myself is that I love drawing. Another thing I learned is that I don't like winter because it is easy to catch colds if you don't wear enough warm clothes. ■

Jayden Niampa | *Grade Six* | *Mrs. Ashie, School Media Specialist*

THE PANDEMIC AFFECTED MY OUTLOOK ON LIFE BECAUSE IT WAS ONE OF THE SCARIEST MONTHS THAT I HAD EXPERIENCED. I couldn't see my friends. I couldn't go to school. I wasn't able to see my family. I couldn't even open the door and put my feet outside because I was too scared.

I found out how dangerous it was during the pandemic and how so many people were dying every single day trying to survive the craziness that was happening. I also really hated the fact that until this day newborn babies are dying from the Covid-19, which is absolutely crazy and sad.

The time I experienced an embarrassing moment on a Webex call was when I was eating. The teacher told us to turn on our cameras. But I didn't want to because I was eating. So when the other students turned on their cameras while I was still eating, she told me to turn on my camera. I tried to think of an excuse until I found one. I told her that I was doing something. Then she said, "Ok". A few seconds later I pressed the spacebar by accident. This turned on my camera. That was one of the times I experienced an embarrassing moment on Webex call. ■



MY SCARE AWAY COVID MASK

Aydrien Hernandez | *Grade One* | *Celeste Verissimo, Instructor, Art*
Belmont Runyon Elementary School

PRECISAMOS DE VOCÊ

#MaskUpNewark

Você tem o poder
de manter as
pessoas seguras.

Certifique-se que tem
uma máscara.

Certifique-se de que todos
que você conhece tenham
uma máscara.

USE A MÁSCARA.



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CITY OF **NEWARK**
Mayor Ras J. Baraka

Aaron Santana | *Grade Six | Mrs. Ashie, School Media Specialist*

DURING THE PANDEMIC MY OUTLOOK CHANGED BECAUSE IT SHOWED ME HOW FAST THINGS CAN GO DOWN. If you told me that 2018 was going to be one of the biggest pandemics in history I would have ignored you. But it ended up happening. Before I never really played outside. But being stuck inside was getting boring. That feeling just kept growing and growing.

That was also an ironic thing. I used to hate going outside. Any other time I was either told to go outside or forced to do so. During the pandemic I was happy because I had a reason to not go outside. But then 2 months of being inside got to me. I just wanted to take a step, a single step outside.

Also during the pandemic, I would say that there was a huge amount of use of social media. It was pretty much the only thing you could do. I spent maybe 85% of the day using some technology. I ran out of things to even watch on TV. I never thought I would say, "I'm bored of social media", but that is what happened.

When I heard we were going to have class on the computer I was bummed out. I expected nobody to join and it would be hard to learn. At first, it was kind of like that but the things that I liked made up for it. One of the things I liked was having the option to show your face or not. I never had energy in the morning so I was happy to have more time to sleep. I also could log in even when I was sick. So I learned that I actually liked having classes on Webex. ■

**"If you told me that 2018 was
going to be one of the
biggest pandemics in history
I would have ignored you.
But it ended up happening."
*Aaron Santana***

“You can still enjoy life and spend time with your family, play games, watch movies, tell scary stories, or something else. Cherish the time you spend with one another.”

Ashrah Hopkins Gray

Ashrah Hopkins Gray | *Grade Seven*

Mrs. Ashie, School Media Specialist

I HAVE FOUND HOPE EVEN THOUGH COVID-19 IS STILL AROUND. When I say that, I mean even though we had to stay in the house to quarantine, I still found ways to spend time with my family. We have fun in a safe way so that we don't get sick. Instead of going outside, we play games in the house. We would play card games like Uno, etc.

To spread joy, I would visit my aunt and three cousins. We would watch movies and play. Since Covid-19 is still around, for the safety of ourselves and others, we will visit them for a short amount of time. We would play Roblox or Slide. I enjoy the time I spend with my family.

My reaction to the protests that have followed the death of George Floyd is just astonishment. It is astonishing, because cops thought using tear gas or shooting at us would change things. They thought the demonstrators would run away and act like nothing happened. We have been protesting for years and will continue to do so. Nothing can stop us from fighting to be treated equally. We have been treated differently and seen differently for too long.

The pandemic is annoying. But I still find ways to enjoy my life and time with my family. A lot of things are still happening, but we can still enjoy life. Don't let this entirely change everything. You can still enjoy life and spend time with your family, play games, watch movies, tell scary stories, or something else. Cherish the time you spend with one another. When I am with my family, we like to talk about our problems. This is important because we can try and solve these problems. To spread kindness, sometimes if my neighbor gets a package, I would take it home so nobody steals it. When they get home, I give them the package. They do the same for us. We do not spend our money for some random person to come and steal our stuff, which is why we look out for one another. ■

Bintou Sacko | *Grade Seven* | *Mrs. Ashie, School Media Specialist*

I HAVE FOUND HOPE EVEN THOUGH THE COVID-19 VIRUS IS STILL AROUND. I have learned to not take anything for granted over the years because anybody can catch the virus. Even though Covid-19 is still around I have found joy. I have learned to appreciate the small things around me and be grateful that I have them.

I noticed that big changes began to come when Covid-19 started. I noticed that people should not take anything for granted because anything can be taken away. Another thing I have noticed was that time seemed to go faster since the pandemic started. It has almost been 2 years now but it feels like a month. I have also noticed that during remote learning we have been getting way more class work. It was very stressful but I got through it. I am glad that we're back in school because I learn better. Also we have less work and I get better grades.

During the pandemic one of the things that I have learned about myself is that I should be grateful, humble, and nice. You never know what people are going through so you have to make sure to be nice and humble. Further, I learned more about technology and editing. During the pandemic I was often on technology because we couldn't leave the house. As a result, I have learned to do more things on Google Classroom and Webex.

During the pandemic there was a Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement because of police brutality. George Floyd did not deserve to be killed by the police. I was really upset because the policeman really killed him and used unnecessary force on him because of the color of his skin.

Even though there is still Covid-19, I still have hope and joy because I won't stay depressed forever. I have to move on from the past. The year 2020 has been the worst year for me. But now we are in a new year and I am ready to move on. ■

"I have also noticed that during remote learning we have been getting way more class work. It was very stressful but I got through it. I am glad that we're back in school because I learn better." *Bintou Sacko*

Belmont Runyon Elementary School

Nafaye' Davis | *Grade Six*
Lois Myers | *Library Media Specialist*

COVID 19

I don't like you at all
but I can't change the world
and make you go away
but I can encourage people
to always wear their mask
so they don't get sick
you are ruining the world
kids are stuck home
can't go to school like we used to
can't go outside
getting depressed and anxious
messing with our childhood and future
kids like me need middle school
to know what we want to do with our life
find ourselves and be teenagers
get out of the house
escape abusive relationships
I don't like you Covid-19
never will
you are ruining lives
you don't even know
and you don't even care



MY FAVORITE MASK

Cameron O'Hare | *Grade One* | *Celeste Verissimo, Instructor, Art*
Belmont Runyon Elementary School

Morgan Williams | *Grade Four* | *Lois Myers, Library Media Specialist*

COVID-19 STRUGGLES

Parents, mothers crying
so many people have passed away
Did you know masks are so uncomfortable?
I can't believe
I have to wear this everyday
It's a lot of pressure with Covid
so many people are getting pressured
to take a vaccine
they're not one hundred percent sure about
so many people having a hard time right now—
supermarkets running out of groceries
you barely see disinfectant anywhere
people hoarding toilet paper, bleach, rubbing alcohol
so frustrating, so surreal

North Star Academy Washington Park High School

Dashawn Sheffield | *Grade Ten*

QUARANTINE

Imagine a scenario in which I simply need to be
In the same room as you?
Maintaining discussions isn't my strength I'm better at
Breathing when I hear you breathing
Scrolling through social media on my phone while you're
sucking your thumb and hastily scribbling drawings
Or then again doing your school work
Snickering once in a while
You'd ask me to open my window
Because it's too hot
I'd do yoga on the carpet
When I needed a break
The sound of reverberating silence on the phone implies
It's time to hang up
Yet, if you were here
We'd have the sort of quietness
One would long to never leave.
My kinship with you
Is better when we're side by side,
not through screens

People's Prep Charter School

Michelle Reyes | *Junior*

HI, MY NAME IS MICHELLE REYES, AND I'LL BE TALKING ABOUT MY EXPERIENCE WITH COVID-19. The long-term effect of this pandemic on my mental health is the fear of being sick. While everything was close, we went to my nephew's birthday party, and once we got there, the environment was sick and tiring, meaning that everyone was sick except for my mother, siblings, and I. We asked them what was up with them, and they basically told us that since it's spring, they all have allergies. We honestly found it difficult to believe, because allergies can't hit everyone at the same time. Once we got out of the birthday party, that's when everything started to be different, and everyone started acting weird.

In those times, my mental health and emotions were impacted a lot just from staying in my room and keeping everyone safe. Being home for too long hit me hard because I lost taste, so I barely ate and I lost my smell, so I wasn't worried about my health. The only thing I thought about was going back to my old life where I was active and I wasn't depressed or lonely. I mean, yeah, I had my parents, but everyone was going through their own things, and I wasn't in therapy because once COVID came along, I didn't have a therapist any more. As the days went by, I was going through a lot of breakdowns and I had someone there for me.

COVID-19 was beneficial but bad at the same time because I got to see how people changed, I got the chance to rest myself at school, I got to meet my lovely and kind friend, I was getting good grades in school, and I got the chance to spend more time with my family, but it was bad because I lost taste and smell for things, I lost people, I was depressed 24/7, I wasn't outside as usual, and it was my first year in high school and in the middle of the school year, something had to happen along the way. After COVID-19 changed my point of view on things, there were serious events that were happening, including racism and protests due to the high rates of police brutality during the time. ■





Imani A. Perez | *FOCUS Family Success Center*

American History High School

Alexis Millas | *Honors English* | Ms. Zuccaro

DIFFICULT TIMES

Before we heard that COVID-19 was about infecting people and changing the ways we civilians act, we were spending our time with friends and family without having to worry about a pandemic that's roaming around our planet. But on March 13, 2020, I looked around my classroom without knowing it would be the last time I stepped foot in my elementary school. Everyone in the classroom was telling rumors that a deadly virus has made its way into Newark. After hearing the unfortunate news, I thought I wouldn't be able to see my friends or some of my family members again. Boy was I right.

On March 13, 2020, the school informed us that we needed to stay home for 2 weeks. On March 27, 2020, my mom received a phone call from the school saying that all students needed to stay home until further notice. When I heard that news, I was thrilled because I thought I would be able to relax and not worry about school. Several weeks went by, and I asked my mother if she received a phone call from the school regarding reopening schools, she said she did not receive a phone call from them. I was starting to get worried about my education and my friends. Then I remembered that my older sister sent me a screenshot of Governor Murphy's message on Facebook. His message stated, "BREAKING: I just signed an Executive Order directly for nearly all residents to STAY AT HOME. ALL gatherings are canceled. ALL non-essential retail businesses must indefinitely close their physical stores to the public effective 9:00 p.m tonight. New Jerseyans can still take a walk outside, go buy groceries, or get take-out from a local restaurant. But, otherwise, STAY AT HOME. This is a time for us all to come together to flatten the curve, slow, and eventually halt the spread of #COVID19." When my older sister sent me that message, I felt as if I was destroyed. I've lost hope that school would reopen soon so I could hang out with my friends at lunch. Now, When Governor Murphy stated that we should all stay at home to prevent the spread of COVID-19, he was mistaken.

NECESITAMOS QUE TE ENMASCARES

#MaskUpNewark

Usted tiene el poder
de mantener a las
personas seguras.

Asegúrate de tener una
máscara.

Asegúrese de que todos
sus conocidos tengan
una máscara.

PÓNGASE LA MÁSCARA.



newarkcovid19.com

CITY OF **NEWARK**
Mayor Ras J. Baraka

So on April 8, 2020, that's when I turned 13. However, I did not expect something so traumatizing to take place on my birthday. On that day, my father received a phone call from my mother at 12:30 p.m. Once they were done talking, my father said that my mom was feeling ill. So we got into the car and we were on our way to pick her up. 25 minutes went by, and we arrived. Once I saw my mother get out of work, She looked pale and weak. When she got into the car, my father hugged my mother, and so I did the same. On our way back home, my mother was coughing countless times. When we arrived home, my father and I helped my mother walk to the house. Around 2:20 p.m, my uncle arrived from work and he saw my mother vomiting in the kitchen. My father and uncle tried their best to help calm the vomiting. When I saw that my mother was vomiting, I looked at the moon and asked myself, "Why us? What did we do to deserve this?" Fifteen minutes later, my mother and father went to the room to sleep while my uncle was in the kitchen thinking about what happened. Days went by and the symptoms were getting worse. So on April 13, 2020, 5:30 A.M, I woke up from the sound of someone closing the front door. I looked out the window, and I saw my father taking off his jacket and giving it to my mother since it was raining at the time, and he also helped my mother get into the car. When they drove off, my uncle came out of his room and I asked him, "Que Paso?" which means "What Happened?" He sat down and told me, "Tu padre llevó a tu Madre al hospital. Ella no se siente bien en este momento" which means "Your father took your mother to the hospital. She is not feeling well right now." I waited for hours until at 4:30 p.m, my dad came home but I did not see my mom. Once he came through the front door, I asked him "Where's mom?" He said that the doctors told him to go back home since her symptoms were very severe. So on April 14, 2020, my father went to the hospital to pick up my mom. Several minutes came by, I heard the sound of them coming in. My father got out

"She didn't want to tell me what happened but she did call some family members to tell them what happened with my older brother. She said that once she arrived, she saw my sister holding onto my brother since he looked very pale, he wasn't receiving enough oxygen and his coughs were really dry." *Alexis Millas*

of the car to assist my mom since she felt really weak at the time. When my mother got out, she had a breathing tube that the doctors provided her with so she won't have a hard time breathing. Once they opened the front door, my mom looked very pale and I was really sad to see that she had to wear that breathing tube. My mom wasn't able to speak as much because speaking requires a lot of energy and that's the thing she didn't have. When she spoke, she said she was tested positive for COVID-19. My mother, my father, and my uncle were in tears. During those weeks, my father tested positive for COVID-19. Both my mother and father were in their room coughing and gagging. My uncle and I tried our best to show them our support and provide them with medicine and food. Until one day, My mother got the courage to go to the kitchen and make some tea and she also made some really strong liquid that would help with our stuffy nose. After drinking the tea and inhaling the strong scent that came from the liquid, we were all able to recover slowly until one day we were all tested negative for COVID-19.

**“When I saw that my mother
was vomiting, I looked at the moon
and asked myself, Why us?”**

Alexis Millas

Now, on March 6, 2021, at 7:48 P.M, my mother received a phone call from my older brother. He told her that he wasn't feeling well so he and his girlfriend would go to the pharmacy to get tested for COVID-19. About an hour later, he called her again saying he tested positive. My mother was crying over the phone, my brother told her not to worry since he's not coughing as much and his symptoms weren't as severe. However, He was wrong when he said not to worry. March 11, 2021, was picture day at my school. Around 11:28 I was getting dressed until my mother said she'll go to the pharmacy with my dad to pick up some medication for my brother. I waited for an Hour. At 12:28, my mom came back crying. She didn't want to tell me what happened but she did call some family members to tell them what happened with my older brother. She said that once she arrived, she saw my sister holding onto my brother since he looked very pale, he wasn't receiving enough oxygen and his coughs were really dry. When they got into the car, my mother felt her son's death, she felt as if he was going to die if they didn't arrive at the hospital on time. Luckily, they made it before



anything serious happened, however, there was no one at the main entrance. My mother was crying and yelling, “Someone, please help my son, please!” Later on, a guard and a surgeon came and took him to the room. My sister stood there in shock, she didn’t move or speak since the fear was getting to her. They weren’t allowed to go any further since his symptoms were really severe and they did not want my mother and sister to get infected because of that. A week went by and I received a phone call from my older sister. She asked if I wanted to go with her to the hospital to pick my older brother up from the hospital. I said sure and in five minutes she was outside. We were on our way to the hospital and we were talking about what happened the weekend before. We arrived at the hospital in less than 30 minutes, my brother waved at us. He got in the car and my sister and I were so happy to see him. Unfortunately, we weren’t able to hug him since he still had COVID-19.

Now, let’s go back in time before we picked my brother up from the hospital. On March 12, 2021, my mom decided it would be a good idea to clean my brother’s room since she did not want the virus to still roam around my sister’s house. After about 35 minutes of cleaning, my mom made tea for my sister and her husband. I remember that after cleaning my brother’s house, my sister started to get chills, she also started to develop headaches. After two days, she was tested positive for COVID-19. When my mother and I went to visit my sister, she looked very grumpy and exhausted. So my mom made some chicken soup and some tea so that it could help fight the virus

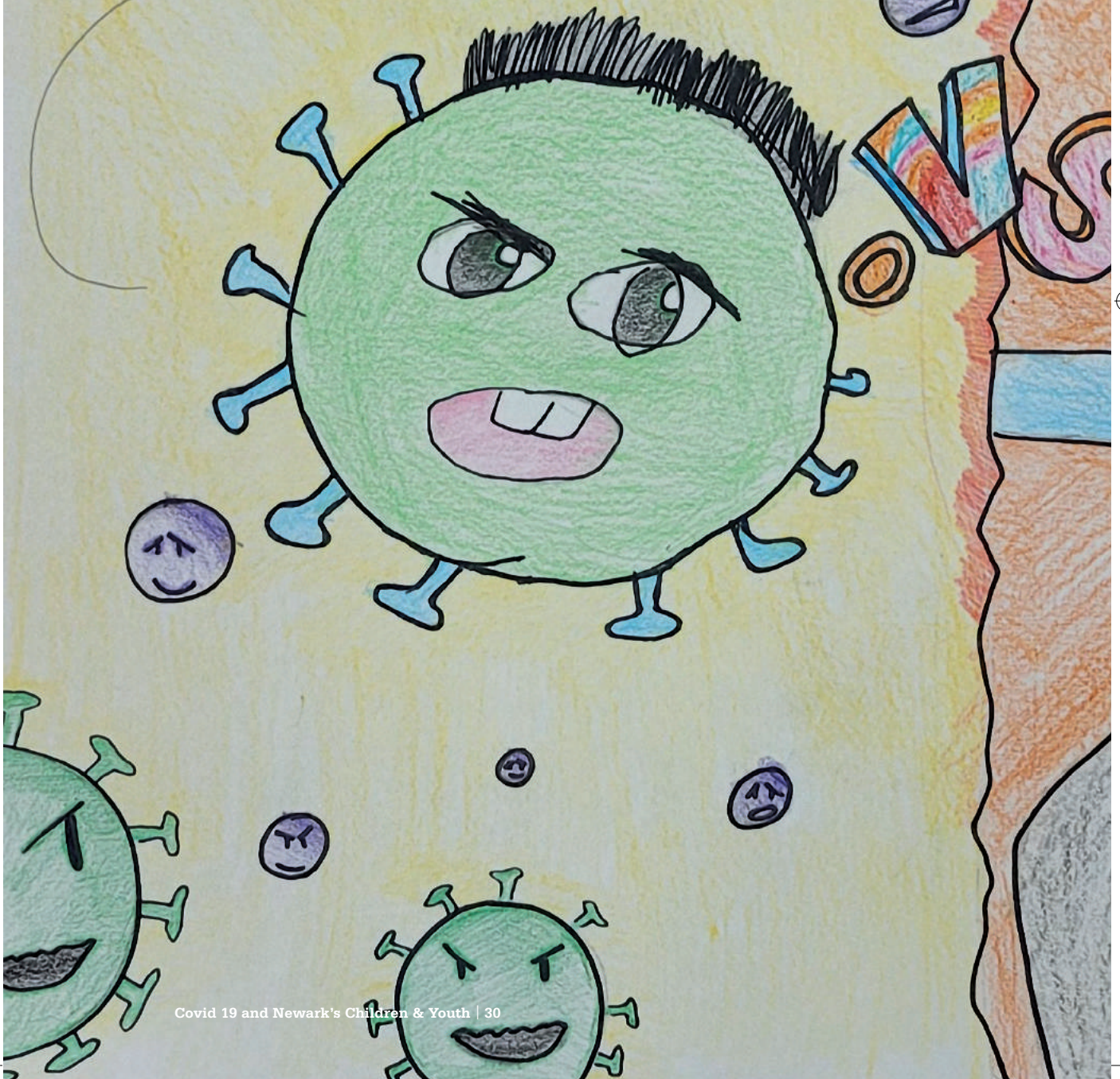
that my sister had. Fortunately, after 4 days my sister was feeling much better than before which gave her the strength that she needed to pick up my brother from the hospital that has been previously mentioned.

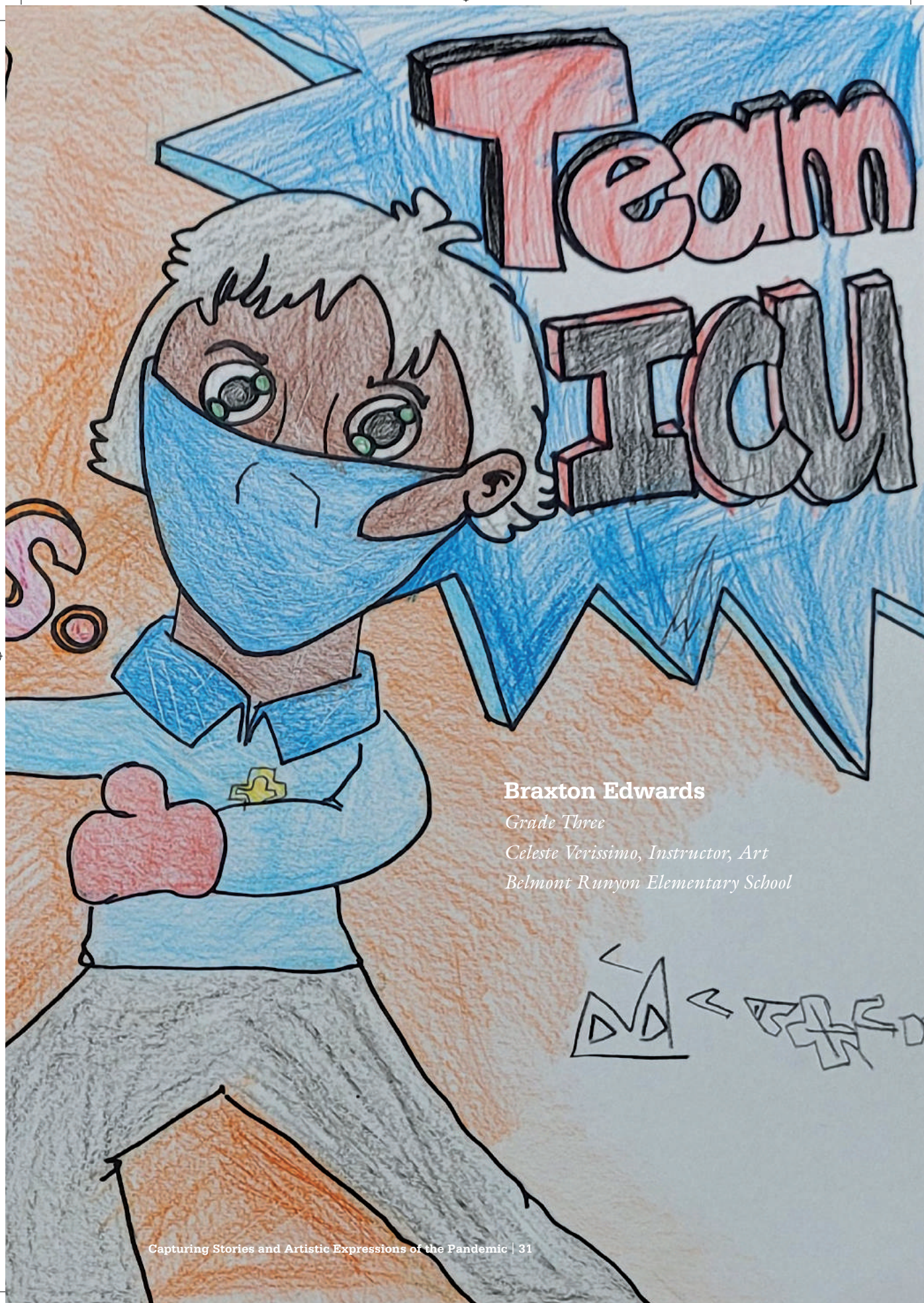
After gathering all the information that I was able to acquire from my personal experiences, these were the damaging occasions my family and I have experienced during the pandemic. During these really difficult times, me and my family members did not let the pandemic take one of us down. To accomplish this, we all worked together and provided each other with the essentials that we needed to survive and keep on fighting this deadly virus that has been roaming around our planet for almost 3 years now. My family and I did not let the virus get to us, instead, we kept on fighting and letting the virus know that it won't take us down. But sadly, my grandpa passed away on May 24, 2021. His loss gave me and my family the strength and courage to keep on fighting this virus. I bet he would be proud of his family because we did not give up that easily. I believe that was something we wanted to tell us if we were there until his last few minutes. Now, some hopes for the future is to not see anyone give up while living in a time like this, and I'd also like to see people helping each other out by providing them with essentials and to also take the time out of their day to talk to people they know instead of talking to them virtually.

During this pandemic, we didn't have the opportunity to talk to people in person since we all needed to follow safety protocols to help prevent spreading this virus amongst other people. Some other hopes I plan on seeing in the future is to not see a line of people waiting outside since there is a limit to how many people are allowed to go into a store. Lastly, what I want my people to do is not give up on this pandemic, I want all of us to work together as a team. We can't defeat this pandemic alone, we need encouragement, strength, and love from other people. And if we all work together as a team, then that would give us the opportunity to put an end to this virus and continue on living our regular lives without having to worry about COVID-19. And in a few years, we would be part of history, we would all be known as people who were able to put an end to this crisis by working together and not giving up. ■

“Lastly, what I want my people to do is not give up on this pandemic, I want all of us to work together as a team. We can't defeat this pandemic alone, we need encouragement, strength, and love from other people.” *Alexis Millas*

Team Covid





Braxton Edwards

Grade Three

Celeste Verissimo, Instructor, Art

Belmont Runyon Elementary School

Princewill Aka | *Honors English* | *Ms. Zuccaro*

ON A BLISSFUL SATURDAY AFTERNOON ON MARCH THE 13, I was busy playing games on my computer when all of a sudden my mom got a call from my school. I was in a state of panic, I thought I had done something wrong and one of my teachers called to inform my mom about it. She picked up the call, and she put the call on speaker, my principal uttered “there will be no school for a while due to the deadly virus known as the COVID-19, we are not sure when the school will resume, teachers from each grade posted assignments in Google Classroom so for the meantime complete to earn points towards your grade. We hoped this wasn’t a serious issue and if you have any questions email me and or call the school. Have a great rest of your day.” Me and my mom stood there in shock trying to grasp what we had just heard, I immediately got off my game and did my research. I found out what the COVID-19 was and how it decreased the plethora of lives across the world. I was happy I didn’t have to go to school for a while because I had more time to do what I wanted to do, spend time with my family and relax for as long as I liked, but my happiness didn’t last and my boredom seemed unsustainable.

Staying home all day had its advantages and disadvantages. I spent way more time with my family, we got to know each other better and overall had a blast each day doing things we loved together or alone. Usually we didn’t get to experience this since we all had to attend school for 7 hours, so it was an unforgettable experience. 1-2 months later things started to become gloomy, me and my family became really bored, we missed the thrills of going outside. At the time we were also running out of food supplies, so we had to go to the grocery store. We used this as an excuse to go outside, but we rarely went out, so it still didn’t sustain our boredom. My sisters were frustrated because my parents wouldn’t let them go out to play sports and do all types of stuff. My older sister decided to use this to pull a prank on my dad to lighten our mood a little. She told us that she would tell him that she left the house and told us to play along.

“Me and my mom stood there in shock trying to grasp what we had just heard...I found out what the COVID-19 was and how it decreased the plethora of lives across the world.”
Princewill Aka

When my dad called to check on us, he asked if she went out, and then she claimed that she had gone outside with his permission, he was furious. I couldn't hold in my laughter, but I stayed strong, so I wouldn't ruin the prank, same goes with my other siblings. He was going off, he said "why didn't you at least inform me!" Do you know that you are risking your whole family in jeopardy just so you can play sports! He was furious, his tone, his facial expressions, he was unleashing hell on her. My sister couldn't stand it anymore, so she decided to reveal the prank. We all giggled with joy, my dad was laughing his heart out complementing us on a decently planned plan. This whole prank brought a light to our gloomy house, so we decided to do the same on April 1st but on my mother, as an April fool prank. We couldn't sustain our boredom, so we decided to do it 1 day before April fools. This was around the time stimulus checks were being distributed to families.

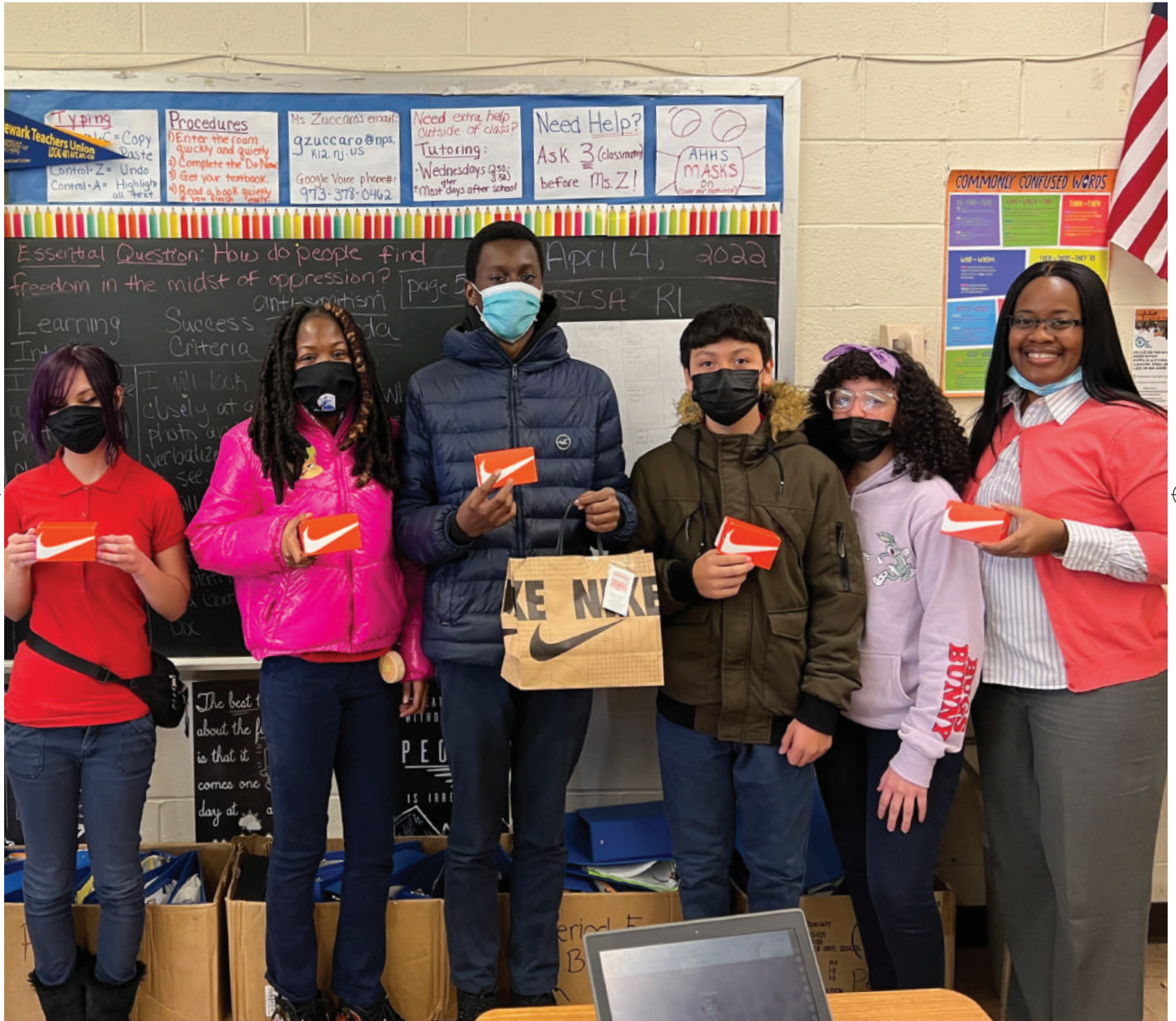
"Staying home all day had its advantages and disadvantages. I spent way more time with my family, we got to know each other better and overall had a blast each day doing things we loved together or alone." *Princewill Aka*

My brother wanted to build me a new PC at the time, so we put the dots together and came up with telling her that we spent the money on the PC parts we needed and some shoes my sisters had wanted to purchase. When she came home we greeted her and allowed her to eat and take a shower, so she could be relaxed when she heard the "bad news." My older sister decided to enact the prank like she did before, she started by telling her the details on how the check came in the mail and how we spent it. At first, she didn't look bothered then we decided to add fuel to the fire by saying "we spent it all on candy from Amazon" She yelled at all of us especially my brother because the stimulus check was initially his, and it was meant to be for his college. She then said "do you know how much money you wasted on rubbish." She decided to call my dad and inform him about the situation, thankfully he didn't suspect a thing. After being yelled at for 2 hours my sister decided to add more fuel to the fire by asking us to not reveal the prank till the next day. Fast-forward to the next day we revealed the prank to them and my mom and dad were laughing so hard. They said "what kind of prank do you guys come up with."

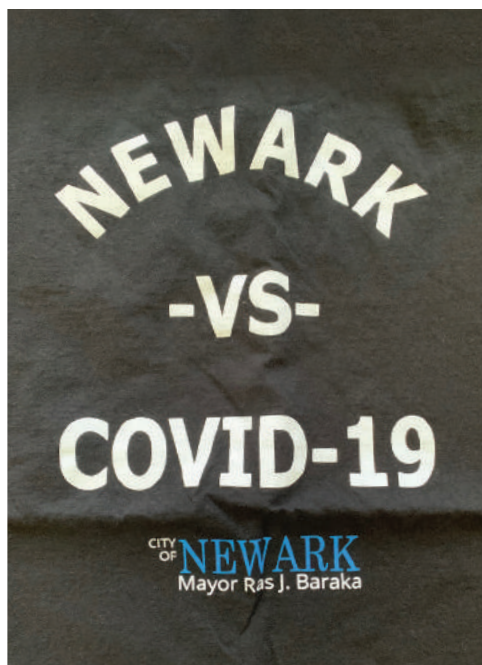
We ran out of prank ideas and if we tried to prank them again they would see through our devious acts. Fast-forward some months later, we tried to throw away some books we had from our previous grades and schools, but my sister saw that on TikTok people were selling their books for a lot of money, so we decided to give it a try. It also didn't work out because we couldn't ship any of them. A family friend who my sister had the same name as lost her dad due to COVID-19. She tried to comfort her by giving her words of encouragement, but I could tell she felt her pain too. COVID-19 started off as a blessing because we all loved staying home, but it got way too to the point where it became boring over time, doing things like playing games together, pranking our parents, and watching movies together, but then it became a curse because we got too bored. Fast-forward to going back to school, it was a new experience, but it didn't feel like something strange since I have experienced it before. I felt happy to be back in person learning because I could finally focus on what the teacher was teaching, so I could ace the tests and quizzes. I didn't like the idea of wearing a mask the whole day, but I was excited to see my friends, and I was elated that I had survived through COVID-19 and made it up to this point, so many families lost loved ones while I was busy having fun with mine, it really hurt knowing that people didn't get to spend time with their family because a virus took their lives, there is no way to turn back time, but I am grateful that my family didn't come in contact with the virus or claim any of our lives. ■



“I felt happy to be back in person learning because I could finally focus on what the teacher was teaching, so I could ace the tests and quizzes.” *Princewill Aka*



Our youth, their voices, their stories. The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow. NELSON MANDELA



Mya Archie

Honors English | Ms. Zuccaro

ON MARCH 11 2020 THE PANDEMIC STARTED. It was on a saturday but the day before that i was walking home with all my friends and we were laughing and having fun, when we went home we never thought that that would be the last time we would see each other till our graduation.

During the pandemic it was hard to find things to keep us save from covide like wipes or lysol to spray germs away i barely went outside i was always in the house but that's what i usually do so it wasn't a big deal. me and my family started to notice that my great grandma's health was

getting bad, she always been sick but she got worse she's 83 almost 84 february 10th she took care of all 6 of her kids well and her grandkids and she loves when i come to her house every friday she's funny caring and she makes the best food. she was in and out the hospital for a bit but now she's okay she just still have pains in her legs sometimes and she starting to have a slight memory loss i always check on her when i'm not doing anything.

Online classes was very hard to get used to and i felt like i didn't learn anything so when i went to school for my freshman year it was very hard for me to understand everything that we were learning but now i have gotten used to it and i am doing a lil better but i just have a little trouble here and there. sometimes i think about the friends that i had when i was in middle school and think maybe if we went to school during 8th grade we would all still be talking to each other and it hurts me to think about the times that i had with them that i will never get to experience again. i only hear from some of them but we arent that close anymore sense we never really talk that much but i don't let that get to me because i made a lot of new friends this year and there funny and caring and they just bring the good side out of me.

I learned to never let things like not talking to my old friends like i use to bring me down and i know spend every second i have left with my great grandma because i know that she isn't well. i know now to never take things for granted, to not let my pride get to me and to always tell the people that i love i love them. ■

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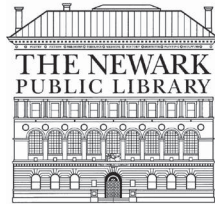
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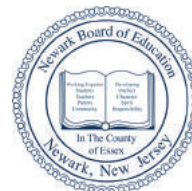
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